

# Natural Area Protection

## Natural Area Management Agreements

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### What is a Natural Area Management Agreement?

A Natural Area Management Agreement is a written contract between a landowner and the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) designed to achieve specific conservation objectives. The agreement will clearly state the management plan for the land and the duration of the agreement. The management objectives will be determined according to the conservation goals of the landowner and DCR, and will be based on the specific management needs of natural heritage resources. The contract will be valid after it is signed by the landowner and the director of DCR. This is a legal agreement which may be cancelled by either party following a 30 day notice.

### How are Natural Areas Managed?

Natural areas are managed to retain their natural character and to ensure the long-term survival of natural heritage resources. Various management techniques are used to preserve rare or vanishing flora and fauna, natural environments and ecosystems.

Each natural area requires a management plan written to address the characteristics and conditions of the area. An important aspect of natural area management planning is determining what land-uses are compatible within a given area. This planning requires a thorough analysis of the ecological values of a particular site along with the economic and social influences. The landowner and DCR agree on compatible land-use practices and incorporate those in a plan.

Many natural areas require active management to ensure rare natural communities and species flourish. DCR natural area stewards provide technical expertise in developing management plans and implementing ecological management projects. Common ecologi-

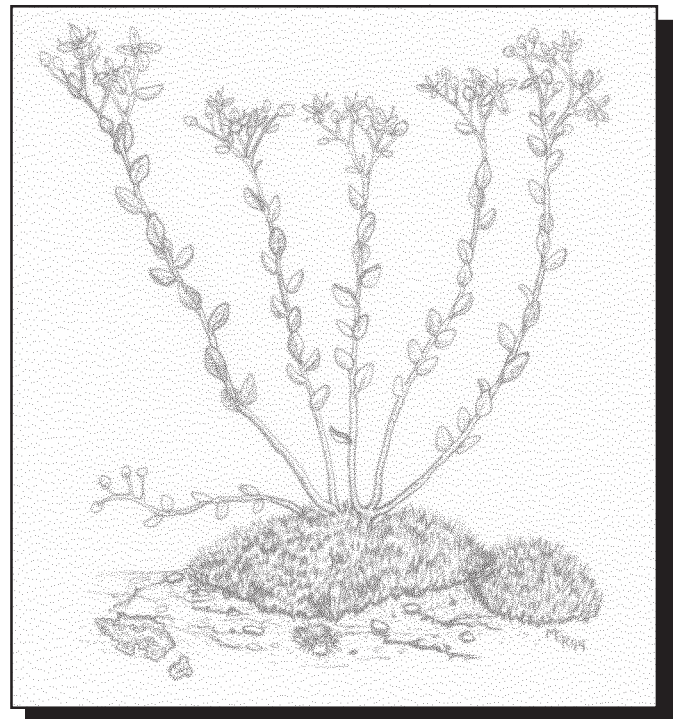
cal management techniques include prescribed burning, invasive species control, biological monitoring and hydrologic restoration.

### What Lands Qualify for a Natural Area Management Agreement?

Natural Area Management Agreements are designed to preserve the commonwealth's most significant natural areas.

To be eligible, a property must include one or more of these natural values:

- ◆ habitat of rare, threatened or endangered plant and animal species,
- ◆ rare or state significant natural communities,
- ◆ rare or state significant geologic sites.



### Why Should a Landowner Consider a Natural Area Management Agreement?

In selecting this protection option, the landowner is rewarded with the pride of contributing to the conservation of Virginia's natural heritage. If the landowner wishes, the professional staff of DCR can offer management advice or assistance. The DCR stewardship staff is available to develop and implement plans for various management procedures such as pre-

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scribed burning, control of invasive species, establishment of vegetative buffers, and hydrologic restoration. In addition, our stewardship staff will monitor the condition of the resources for the landowner as well as provide the owner with information about the resources on his/her land.

### Who Should Consider a Natural Area Management Agreement?

A Natural Area Management Agreement is an option available to conserve natural areas on either publicly or privately owned land. This option is well suited for the

landowner who wishes to retain ownership of land and takes pride in the natural features of his/her property. It is best suited for landowners who are committed to conserving natural heritage resources.

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For more information, contact the Department of Conservation and Recreation.

